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Senate

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. STEVENS).

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

O God, our Father, we come to You not because we are strong but because we are weak; not because we have merits of our own but because we need mercy and help. We come relying on Your strength to do in and through us what we cannot do in our own power.

Give us the grace to accept Your guidance, to obey Your word, and never to leave Your path. Keep our faith true to the end.

Strengthen our Senators for the challenges of today. Keep them from looking so longingly at doors closed that they cannot see other doors opening before them.

Help each of us to be so pure in heart that we may see You. We pray in Your righteous name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The PRESIDENT pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will be a period for the transaction of morning business for up to 30 minutes, with the first half of the time under the control of the minority leader or his designee and the second half under the control of the majority leader or his designee.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. FRIST. Today, we will start with a 30-minute period for morning business. After morning business, we will resume consideration of the tax reconciliation bill. This morning when we return to that bill, there will be 10 hours remaining under the statutory time limitation. If all time is used, the debate will not run out until 8 tonight, at the earliest. I hope that we will not need all of that time.

I encourage the chairman and ranking member to yield back time if it is not necessary so that instead of finishing at 8, within that statutory limit, it would be earlier. If there are to be a series of votes, we could start those votes at a much earlier time. If all of that time is used until 8 and we have votes, it is going to be a very long night. So, again, I encourage the chairman and ranking member—

Mr. REID. Will the distinguished majority leader yield?

Mr. FRIST. I would be glad to.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. REID. I have spoken to our manager of the bill, Senator BAUCUS. He would agree to have the time that is used for the votes to be counted against the time. That has not been entered yet. I do not think Senator GRASSLEY would have any objection to that. Maybe we should enter into that agreement at this time.

Mr. FRIST. I think that would be ideal. I still think we might be able to yield some time back in addition to that.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that all time required for voting be part of the 10 hours that remain in terms of the statutory limit.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, in addition to that, I know everybody is concerned about travel plans and when we are going to leave. I have been very clear throughout that we have business to do. This is the last legislative effort before we leave for Christmas, but it is also important that we recognize we still have four conference reports that are open that we are waiting to bring and take to the floor. So I encourage our colleagues to try to close those reports as soon as possible. Again, there are four that are outstanding.

In addition, I made it very clear that we are going to address the PATRIOT Act legislation before we leave. There are good discussions underway. I know those discussions were continuing late into last night. I encourage all of our colleagues to understand the importance of that legislation. We want to get it right and make sure that it is in good shape to bring to the floor, but we do need to address that before we leave.

Terrorism reinsurance, TRIA, is another issue that is coming along well. It is very important legislation, and there has been a lot of work, but we need to actually bring that to the floor as soon as possible. We have a number of nominations that are being considered, and we will have to make certain decisions on those over the next 24 hours.

Lastly, I am running through the list in my own mind of things we have to do before we leave, a continuing resolution—I was talking to the Democratic leader about the continuing resolution which we have to do to keep the Government open—will be coming from the House sometime today. Because the President has to sign that by tomorrow night, we need to act expeditiously on that continuing resolution because we actually have to physically send that to the President, who is overseas at this point.

So we have a lot of work to do. We will stay here tomorrow and into Saturday and, if we have to, go into the

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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